



Howdy, Advocates!

It's been an exciting month in Aggieland as we celebrated our new class of Distinguished Alumni, awarded over 4,300 Aggie Rings, and celebrated an overtime win against a previously undefeated opponent.

Today, Texas will swear in its newest state senator in Austin – Pete Flores, Fighting Texas Aggie Class of 1983. We are proud of his lifelong service to the state, and look forward to his time in office serving the constituents of SD-19. Since our last news update, all of the Texas primaries have been completed, and campaigns and candidates are gearing up for the general elections on Nov. 6.

This edition of the Advocacy news update contains a variety of articles related to politics and higher education. We explore the issue of state funding, including the lasting effects of the Great Recession from 2008. You will also read about the state of civics in our education system, and its important role in preparing citizens for substantial and meaningful political engagement. There is also a comprehensive article that highlights key political races in Texas.

With little fanfare and controversy, the Congress passed the FY19 Appropriations Bill which included funding for several key agencies, including the Department of Education. The Texas congressional delegation played a large role in its negotiation and eventual approval by the President. In particular, we would like to thank Senator Cornyn (R) and Senator Cruz (R) for their role. Please see a summary of this bill and a few others provided by Texas A&M's Government Relations team.

Lastly, I would like to welcome Katina Economides '19 to The Association's team. Katina is a senior political science major, chair of the Student Senate, and has completed two prestigious internships in Washington, D.C. She has hit the ground running and will be a great asset to Strategic Engagement.

Thanks to all for your support of the Advocacy program, Texas A&M, and The

Gig 'em

Dave Fujimoto '17

Director of Strategic Engagement

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What does civics education look like in America?

How well are schools preparing students to be effective citizens, voters, and members of their communities? This question seems more relevant than ever in the current era of contentious and polarized politics.



Students recently earned national attention by organizing the March for Our Lives, a student-led demonstration against gun violence with marches occurring worldwide. This surge of political activism by young people demonstrates a high capacity for political engagement among students. Yet at the same time, real concerns persist about the extent to which schools are equipping all students with the skills they need to be effective citizens, and whether some students will leave school more prepared than others.

Continue reading to find out more about the Brown Center's Report on American Education [here](#).



States' decision to reduce support for higher education comes at a cost

It's college rankings season, and if you look at the top of the listings from *U.S. News & World Report to the Wall Street Journal/Times Higher Education*, you'll notice one thing missing: state universities. Despite the fact that 8 in 10

undergraduates attend a public college or university, very few of those schools crack the top 20 in many of the popular rankings.

It wasn't always that way. In the late 1980s, eight of the top 25 national universities in the U.S. News rankings were public, compared with three today.

Continue reading about this issue in *The Washington Post* [here](#).

How the Great Recession Reshaped American Higher Education

Morgan R. Olsen was feeling excited in 2008, as he prepared for a major career move. He had accepted a top gig at Arizona State University, managing its finances as executive vice president and treasurer. But in his first semester on the job, Lehman Brothers filed for bankruptcy, a key moment in the nationwide economic recession that would rattle higher education and many other American sectors.



"It got a lot more exciting in a hurry," Olsen said in a recent interview.

During the past 10 years, the financial meltdown and its aftermath have spurred considerable change in how academic leaders run their institutions, public research universities in particular. Immediate funding shortfalls and tightened credit from banks squeezed many colleges, leading to furloughs and cutbacks.

Continue reading in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* [here](#).



Update from Texas A&M Government Relations

FY19 Appropriations: On September 28, President Trump signed the Defense, Labor/HHS appropriations package (H.R. 6157) into law, funding the massive agencies. This measure also extended funding through December for agencies covered by the Agriculture, Transportation-HUD, Financial Services, Interior-Environment, Homeland Security, State-Foreign Operations, and Commerce-Justice-Science bills. The President previously signed legislation providing 2019 appropriations for the Departments of Energy and Veterans Affairs, military construction and water agencies (e.g., Corps of Engineers).

FAA Authorization Bill: The Senate is slated to consider the Federal Aviation Administration Authorization Bill which includes authorization for "veterinary emergency teams," creating a national program inspired by the Texas A&M Veterinary Emergency Team.

Farm Bill: The House and Senate were not able to resolve differences on a number of issues in the Farm Bill and did not extend expiring authorities beyond their current authorizations, some of which expire at the end of October. The House and Senate agriculture committees will continue to work to resolve differences with the potential to reach agreements this month, but likely will not reach consensus until after the mid-term elections next month.

Here are 34 races to watch in the Texas midterms

The hotly contested U.S. Senate race between Republican Ted Cruz and Democrat Beto O'Rourke has drawn the lion's share of attention in Texas this election cycle. But plenty of races for Congress and the Texas Legislature are



drawing strong interest as Election Day approaches. In some cases, races are closer than they have been in years.

Early voting for the Nov. 6 election starts Oct. 22 and ends on Nov. 2.

Continue reading about Texas' midterm elections [here](#).

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